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NEWSLETTER SEPT 2006 #2



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Thanks to the interest shown by supporters of www.warrigalpress.com.au and www.joeblake.com.au we are pleased to release newsletter No 2.

One of the most popular Australian fiction writers is the late **J E MacDonnell** and at Warrigal Press we receive more requests for information about him than any other author. Thanks to Greg Ray we have included a MacDonnell biography and book list.

The recent death of crime writing legend **Mickey Spillane** is sure to spark interest in his works and we have included a brief look at his books and life.

And of course the newsletter wouldn't be complete without the latest Detective Joe Blake news! Two art students have provided their artwork for the next **Joe Blake** book, *Warning Shots Last*, which is due for release in late 2006 or early 2007. Will Schorer has created a Joe Blake image and Dmitry Sergeev has drawn an illustration of **Madame Lachet**, the female protagonist in Joe's next book.

Warrigal Press invites all enthusiasts to contribute to this free newsletter. If you

have a story about popular publishing please let us know.

Warrigal Press awaits your comments and contributions.

Feel free to email this publication to any friends or associates who may be interested and ask them to contact me if they would like to be added to the mailing list.

Please remember, the images in this newsletter remain the property of the artists and publishers and have been reproduced here for the purpose of criticism and review. If anyone has an issue with the inclusion of any images in this newsletter please contact me and they will be withdrawn

Cheers,

Bob Sheppard
bobsheppard@warrigalpress.com.au
p/f 08 92950891
mob 0407770139

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In the next issue



Those incredible John Slater novels, including a book review by Cynthia S & Gordon Reid's Horror, Fantasy & Sci-Fi Movie Paperback guide.



Joe Blake update

Joe Blake

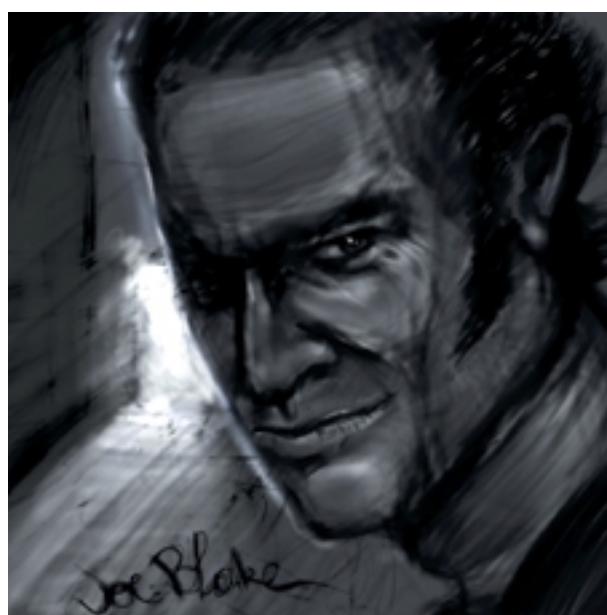
WARNING SHOTS LAST

The next Detective Joe Blake adventure

Two of Jon Greenwood and Neil Hollis' students from the illustration unit in the Graphic Design and Multimedia course at the WA School of Art have submitted cover art concepts for the next Joe Blake book. Dmitry Sergeev and Will Schorer have created these fantastic covers and also decided to put faces to both Detective Joe Blake and Madame Lachet. Warrigal Press, with help from Joe Blake, have yet to decide on what cover art will be used on *Warning Shots Last* due for release later this year. We look forward to your feedback to bobsheppard@warrigalpress.com.au



Cover and Joe Blake art by Will Schorer
(c) 2006



Cover and Madame Lachet art by Dmitry
Sergeev (c) 2006





JAMES Edmond MacDonnell, one of Australia's most prolific paperback writers, often used to base his naval adventure stories around pieces of cover art presented to him by his publisher, Horwitz.

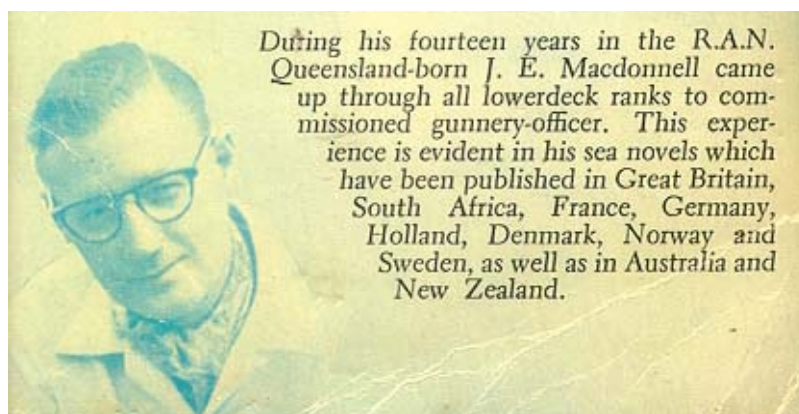
The covers, by artists as prolific in their field as MacDonnell was in his, included pulp luminaries such as Phil Belbin and Peter Chapman.

In an interview with MacDonnell in 1959 or 1960, *The Daily Telegraph* reported:

"A few weeks ago he had a note from his paperback publishers, enclosing photostatic copies of two coloured cover designs for yarns which he has not yet started to write or even conceived.

One drawing depicted an aircraft attacking a destroyer, the other, a destroyer heading at full speed onto a floating mine. "I'd appreciate it," said the writer of the accompanying letter, "if you would include scenes to fit these covers in any of your future stories."

MacDonnell was not offended by this proposal. On the contrary, he accepted it as a tribute to his professional efficiency, which whether as a seaman or a



From the rear of a J E MacDonnell novel

writer has always been one of J.E. MacDonnell's aims. It still is."

MacDonnell had no illusions about his ability: he considered himself a competent craftsman rather than an artist, but his books were immensely popular and they still enjoy a solid following among both readers and collectors.

Born in 1917 in Mackay, Queensland, and raised in Toowoomba, James (Jim) Edmond MacDonnell joined the navy at 17 years of age and saw action in WW2. He spent 14 years in the Navy and was a commissioned gunner when he retired from the service.

MacDonnell wrote articles and stories in *The Bulletin* under the pen name James MacNell and in 1948 he joined *The Bulletin* to write the "Personal Items" page. He apparently contributed articles about wartime issues to *The Bulletin* and other articles of a similar

type certainly appeared in *The Australasian Post*, *The Australian Journal*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *Woman*, *The Australasian*, *The Adelaide Advertiser*, *The Western Mail* and *Pocket Book Weekly*. Stories by MacDonnell also appeared in the annual Australian War Memorial books that were issued during and after World War 2.

His first book, *Fleet Destroyer*, a collection of stories about life on the small ships, was published by The Book Depot, Melbourne, in 1945 while MacDonnell was on active service as a Petty Officer.

Valiant Occasions (a similar collection of stories) was published by Constable of London in 1952, after having been first apparently rejected by an Australian publisher.

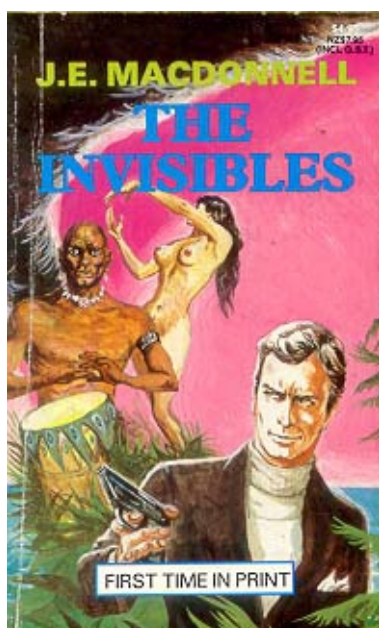
Constable published MacDonnell's first novel, *Gimme the Boats*, in 1953, followed in the same year by



Wings off the Sea and subsequently by *Jim Brady Leading Seaman* (1954), *Commander Brady* (1956) and *Subsmash* (1960).

In 1956 he joined Australian mass-market publisher Horwitz, for whom he wrote about 12 novels a year. He ultimately published more than 200 novels.

MacDonnell wrote spy stories (the Mark Hood international espionage series) and a series of medical novels. He wrote some books for Horwitz under that firm's house pseudonyms. These names appear to have been shared among the



publisher's regular authors. It is certain that he wrote under the "James Dark" house-name, as some of his Mark Hood books appeared overseas (Signet New American Library) under that name. He also definitely used the Michael Owen pen-name. Some of the "James Workman" books also bear signs of MacDonnell's hand.

In the medical field it is also clear that he wrote many, if not all, of the books in Horwitz's "Kerry Mitchell" series of medical romances. Many of the Kerry Mitchell titles appeared under MacDonnell's own name in the USA.

As James McNeill he wrote a number of books for boys, in which the hero character Captain Mettle deals with Cold War issues.

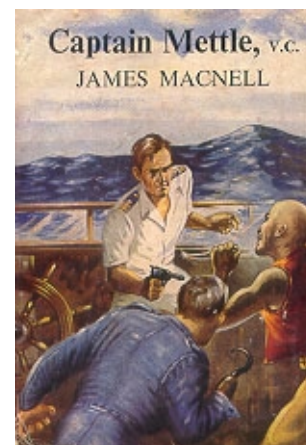
MacDonnell lived and wrote in Sydney for 40 years before retiring to the Sunshine Coast with his wife Valerie in 1988.

He died peacefully in his sleep at a Buderim (Queensland) hospital in 2003. He was survived by his wife and his children Beth, Jane and Peter.

The previously mentioned *Daily Telegraph* article sheds some interesting light on MacDonnell. An edited excerpt follows:

"He was born In Mackay, Queensland, in 1917 and christened James Edmond. His parents moved to Toowoomba when he was two, but soon after he began thinking for himself he determined to go to sea the moment he was old enough to join a ship.

He read every seafaring book he could find, notably Robert Louis Stevenson's



South Sea Tales, and when he was 13 he felt he was ready to see the world.

Early one morning before his parents and the other members of the family — a sister and three brothers — were awake, he crept out of the house.

Mounted on his older brother's bike, and with ninepence in his pocket, he started for Brisbane, 80-odd miles away. When night came he had covered nearly 60 miles, and his craving for adventure was burning — temporarily — a little low.

The night seemed more than ordinarily dark when he reached the town of Rose-





wood. He was tired after his ride. He was also hungry; his only food all day had been a bagful of cakes looted from his mother's tin.

A 13-year-old strange boy pedalling about a small town like Rosewood late at night was bound to rouse some busybody adult's suspicions, and that was what happened. Young MacDonnell was seized and sent back, bike and all, to Toowoomba.

But his hankering for the sea remained; nor was it any the less insistent merely because he had never seen the sea, much less a ship.

Four years later, in the Christmas holidays from Toowoomba Grammar School he wrote to Brisbane, without consulting his parents, asking for application papers to join the Navy. His father astonished him by countersigning the application without demur. All he said was: "You'll never stick in the Navy. I'll be buying you out in six months.

Looking back MacDonnell believes paternal guile inspired those words; he is

convinced his father knew the memory of them would do more than anything else

could to make him see his bargain through.

"Maybe he was right," MacDonnell says. "There were times in my early Navy days when I wanted to quit, but I couldn't bring myself to do it when I remembered what the old man had said."

The Navy ordered MacDonnell to report to Flinders Naval Depot, in Victoria, for training. He started south. And at last, for the first time, he saw a ship.

While waiting for a train connection at Newcastle he wandered on to a wharf. There, tied up, was a weather-beaten ore carrier.

"I stood staring at her," MacDonnell remembers. "I couldn't believe I was looking at a real ship. I thought she was wonderful."

The ship's name was *Iron Knight*, and he told himself he would never forget it.

He did not see *Iron Knight* again for eight years. That was in 1943, when Petty Officer MacDonnell was coxswain of the corvette *H.M.A.S. Townsville* escorting a merchant convoy from Melbourne to Sydney.

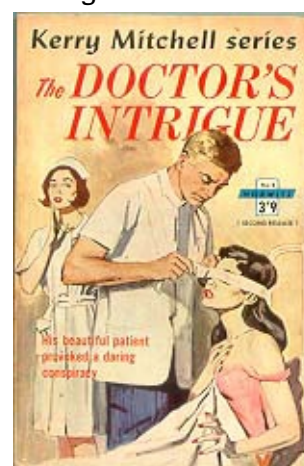
At night, off Wollongong, NSW, he was standing near

the gun on the focs'le when the signalman on the bridge shouted, "Torpedo track approaching starboard!"

The torpedo, launched by a prowling Japanese submarine, passed ahead of *Townsville* and struck a merchantman travelling on the port bow. The merchantman, which sank in three minutes, was *Iron Knight*.

MacDonnell had a busy War. He served in the South Atlantic, Indian Ocean and Pacific, and saw enough fighting to satisfy any normal man's appetite.

He was serving in the cruiser *Hobart* when, five months or so before Japan surrendered, he was ordered to Flinders to do a gunnery course in preparation for taking a commission. The



war was over by the time he was commissioned, but he went back to sea. It was the only job he knew.

Then
1948
came,
and he
was on
leave in
Sydney.

He had written many paragraphs for the *The Bulletin* under the pen-name "Macnell" (he has since written five boys' adventure books under the name of James Macnell), and he called at *The Bulletin* office one day to pay his respects.

The editor heard he was visiting, sent for him, and offered him a job. MacDonnell hardly hesitated; he took the job because, although he enjoyed life in the Navy, he was ready for a change after 14 years of it.

Besides, he liked writing. He started writing in the war, and some of his articles and short stories were published in magazines and newspapers.

So he quit the Navy and started a new life, writing the weekly Personal Items page for *The Bulletin*. He also wrote a series of articles, which *The Bulletin* published, on the biggest naval actions of the war.

One of his friends suggested he should make a book of these articles. He sent them to an Australian publisher, who sent them back,

So he tried them on a London publisher, who liked

them and issued them as a book under the title *Valiant Occasions*. At latest report, *Valiant Occasions* had sold about 80,000 copies.

The sight of his work between hard covers stimulated MacDonnell.

His first novel, *Gimme The Boats* was published in 1953, and its success really settled

any doubt about his future. He stayed with *The Bulletin* for three more years, but in 1966 he quit and settled down to make his living by writing fiction."

MacDonnell's daily routine as a paperback writer began with him reading a page by Joseph Conrad.

"This is not affectation. Like every man who has ever written sea stories, MacDonnell venerates Conrad, and he believes that to read something by Conrad before he begins work helps him to write better prose.

"It's like watching Hoad or Sedgman play tennis, then going out and playing tennis yourself," he says.

After he and his wife and their two-and-a-half-year-old daughter have breakfasted at his Avalon Beach home, about 20 miles from Sydney, he goes on five days a week, to the sun porch, where he does his writing.

There, after a few minutes with *The Nigger of the Narcissus*, *Typhoon* or another of the Conrad novels, he uncovers his typewriter at nine

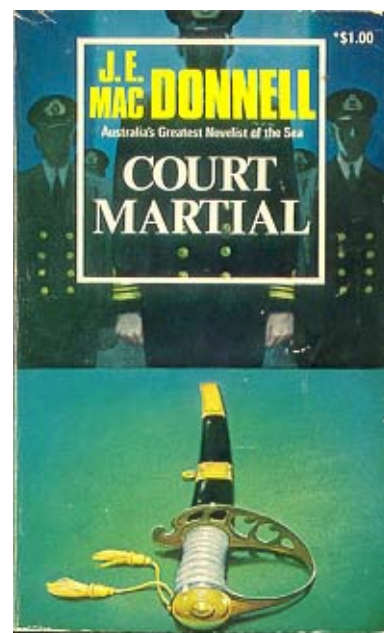
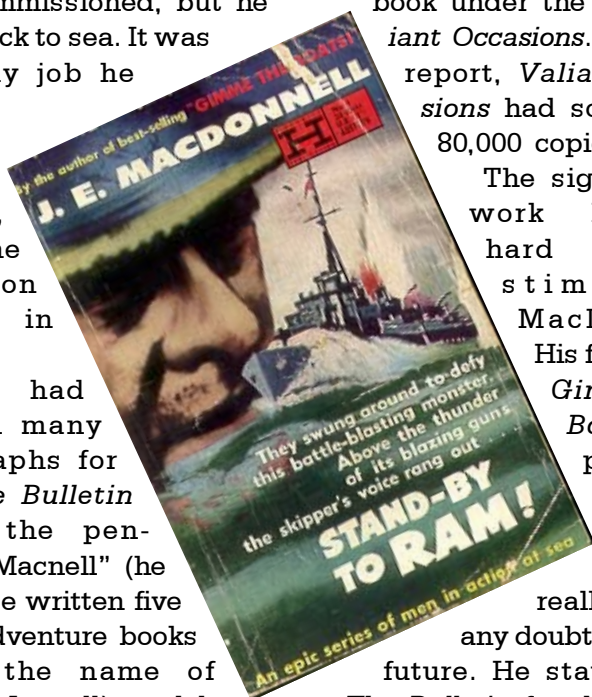
o'clock and sets to work. At two o'clock he finishes writing for the day, having added some 3000 words to whatever novel he happens to be working on.

"I finish at two, even if the torpedo is about to hit the ship," he says, "I find I have to work in a rigidly methodical way. Otherwise I'd never meet my writing commitments."

These commitments would make a less systematic and prolific writer than MacDonnell turn pale with nervous terror. Come tempest, illness, hangovers, or accidents, he must deliver to his Sydney publishers one 45,000-word novel a month.

Such a daily grind would oppress a man who was either physically or nervously frail. MacDonnell, near 43, has robust nerves; he is also powerfully built, and it is not surprising to learn that once, in Alexandria Harbour, he stroked *HMAS Australia's* whaler to victory against the Mediterranean Fleet's best.

Horwitz Publications, of Sydney, are the most active publishers of the popular paperback books operating



in Australia and MacDonnell's contract requires him to supply them with 12 novels a year for five years. This means he must write 540,000 words of paperback fiction a year, a grand total of 2,700,000 words for the five-year period of his contract.

Horwitz has already published 27 of MacDonnell's paperback novels; four more await publication.

They sell briskly at the rate of about 40,000 copies each and thousands of paperback readers now ask at their bookstall for "the latest MacDonnell," without troubling even to glance at the title.

"It's hard going," he admits "Maybe the only reason I can do it is the old Navy discipline."

Whatever the shortcomings of MacDonnell's paperbacks as serious literature, they at least demonstrate his skill in telling a swift-moving action story.

And MacDonnell the writer does not end with MacDonnell the author of paperback yarns; he has written also five serious novels against a R.A.N. background, and two documentary books about naval warfare.

Many critics have praised these novels and books, and the public, especially in the British Isles, has eagerly bought them. His first novel, *Gimme the Boats*, published in 1953, has now sold more than 300,000 copies.

His Brady trilogy is probably the most satisfying piece of writing he has done. The first two novels in the trilogy, *Jim Brady*, *Leading Seaman*, which is strongly

autobiographical, and *Commander Brady*, have had success; the third, *Subsmash!* which will be published in London this month, is expected to do no less well.

His serious books have sold, all told, about 870,000 copies, compared with one million copies of his Horwitz paperbacks. So anybody tempted to dismiss him as a mere catchpenny spinner of words should reconsider the finding.

MacDonnell makes no apologies for what he is doing or the way he does it.

"I'm a professional writer," he says. "No Hemingway, but before I go I'd like to write one book that I could point to and say 'I wrote that,' maybe something like *The Caine Mutiny*. I don't know whether I'll ever write a book of that

quality, but my only hope is to keep on practising."

Nearly all MacDonnell's 30-odd books have had the sea for background, and R.A.N. ships, officers and men have usually provided the action of his tales.

But he does not write of the sea and the R.A.N. because he is able to write of nothing else.

He is interested in many other aspects of life also, and he has lately written two paperbacks based on a surgeon's work — not a sea-going surgeon but one practising in Sydney. He plans to write many more tales on medical themes.

That anything else will ever supplant the sea, or even seriously challenge it, as MacDonnell's favourite writing subject, is, however, unlikely."



J E MacDonnell books are available from
www.warrigalpress.com.au

JE MacDonnell

Compiled by Greg Ray

JE MacDonnell's
naval adventure series,
published by Horwitz:

No 1: Stand by to
Ram, 1957
No 2: Target Uniden-
tified, 1957
No 3: Battle Ensign,
1958
No 4: Enemy in Sight,
1959
No 6: Alarm – E-
Boats!, 1958
No 7: The Weak Link,
1958
No 8: Presumed Sunk,
1958
No 9: Mutiny, 1958
No 10: Coffin Island,
1958
No 11: Frogman!,
1958
No 12: Killer Ship
1958
No 13: Night
Encounter 1958
No 14: Bilgewater
1958
No 15: The Secret
Weapon 1959
No 16: Target
Battleship 1959
No 17: Dive! Dive!
Dive! 1959
No 18: The Surgeon
1959
No 19: The Gunner
1959
No 20: The Captain
1960
No 21: Brood of the
Eagle 1960
No 22: The Recom-
mend 1960
No 23: The Coxswain
1960
No 24: The Challenge
1960
No 25: Convoy 1960
No 26: Find And
Destroy 1960
No 27: Escort Ship
1960
No 28: Don't Gimme
the Ships 1960
No 29: The Blind Eye
1961
No 30: Eagles over
Taranto 1961
No 31: Fleet De-

stroyer (Revised
Edition) 1961
No 32: The Rocky
1961
No 33: The Lesson
1961
No 34: Clear for
Action 1961
No 35: Battle Fire
1961
No 36: The Ordeal
1961
No 37: Sainsbury
VC 1962
No 38: Broadships!
1962
No 39: Battle Line
1962
No 40: The Long
Haul 1962
No 41: Away
Boarders 1962
No 42: The First
Lieutenant 1962
No 43: U-Boat
1962
No 44: Flotilla
Leader 1962
No 45: Sea Surgeon
1962
No 46: Abandon
Ship! 1963
No 47: Conflict
1963
No 48: Repel
Boarders 1963
No 49: Not Under
Command 1963
No 50: Fire One!
1963
No 51: Abandon and
Destroy 1963
No 52: The Buffer
1963
No 53: Decision
1963
No 54: The Gun
1963
No 55: The Pawn
1964
No 56: Sabotage
1964
No 57: The
Betrayal 1964
No 58: Collision
Course 1964
No 59: The Big
Wind 1964
No 60: Killer Group
1964
No 61: The Mistake

1964
No 62: Course to
Intercept 1964
No 63: Creeping
Attack 1964
No 64: The Jaws of
Hell 1965
No 65: Close and
Investigate 1965
No 66: Under Sealed
Orders 1965
No 67: Flashpoint
1965
No 68: White Death
1965
No 69: The Deserter
1965
No 70: The Duel
1965
No 71: Whispering
Death 1965
No 72: Point of
Departure 1966
No 73: Loom of Ice
1966
No 74: Foul Ground
1966
No 75: Hell Ship
1966
No 76: The Convert
1966
No 77: Wall of Fire
1966
No 78: The
Unforgiving Sea
1967
No 79: Down the
Throat 1967
No 80: Combat
Assignment 1967
No 81: The Snake
Boats 1967
No 82: The Misfit
1967
No 83: Behemoth
1967
No 84: Dit Spinner
1967
No 85: The Power
and the Privilege
1968
No 86: Rat Island
1968
No 87: Petty Officer
Brady 1968
No 88: Valiant
Mission 1968
No 89: Full Fathom
Five 1968
No 90: Approved to
Scrap 1968

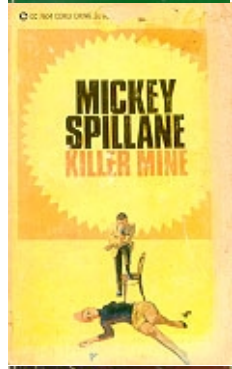
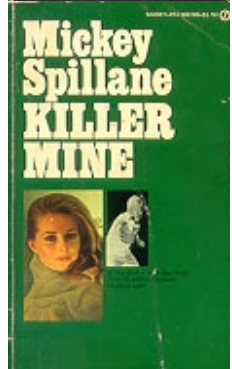
No 91: Attack and be
Damned 1968
No 92: Mission
Hopeless 1968
No 93: Judas Rat
1968
No 94: High
Command 1968
No 95: Hunter-Killer
1968
No 96: White Fury
1968
No 97: The Hammer
of God 1968
No 98: Headlong into
Hell 1968
No 99: Decoyed
1968
No 100: To the
Death 1969
No 101: Execute!
1969
No 102: Strike Force
1969
No 103: The Big
Hunt 1969
No 104: Operation
Jackal 1969
No 105: And the
Heavens Spoke 1969
No 106: Not Wanted
on Voyage 1970
No 107: The Last
Stand 1970
No 108: Object:
Destruction 1970
No 109: Battle
Hymn 1970
No 110: Died
Fighting 1970
No 111: Fog Blind
1970
No 112: Circle of
Fire 1970
No 113: For Valour
1971
No 114: Torrent of
Fire 1971
No 115: Guns for
God 1971
No 116: Damn the
Torpedoes 1971
No 117: First
Command 1971
No 118: Standing
into Danger 1971
No 119: Torpedo
Junction 1971
No 120: The Worst
Enemy 1971
No 121: North West

by North 1971
No 122: Chain of
Violence 1972
No 123: Close Up
1972
No 124: False
Colours 1972
No 125: The Brave
Men 1972
No 126: Point Blank
1972
No 127: Most
Immediate 1972
No 128: This Ship is
Mine 1972
No 129: The Trap
1972
No 130: The Verge
of Hell 1972
No 131: Blind into
Doom 1972
No 132: Fire Storm
1973
No 133: The Iron
Claw 1973
No 134: Attack!
1973 (Scripts
imprint)
No 135: A Council of
Captains 1974
No 136: The Kill
1974
No 137: Court
Martial 1975
No 138: Operational
Immediate 1975
No 139: The Dark
Of The Night (1975)
No 140: The Liberty
Men 1976
No 141: The Battle
for Midway 1976
No 142: Big Bill the
Bastard 1976
No 143: Confirmed
in Command 1976
No 144: Standoff
(1977)
No 145: The Shadow
(1977)
No 146: Death of a
Destroyer 1977
No 147: Valiant
Occasions (1977)

NOT NUMBERED:

148: The Killers
1982
149: Killers II 1984
150: Jim Brady Able
Seaman (1985)

151: Command
Decision 1985
152: Choke Point
1985
153: Change of
Command 1985
154: Search And
Destroy (1987)
155: Combat Patrol
1987
156: The Glory
Hunter (1987)
157: Storm Warning
1987
158: Long Leave
1988
159: Short Cut to Hell
1988
160: Final Haven
1988
161: Strike That Flag
(1988)
162: Firepower (1988)
163: Clear My Line
Of Fire 1988
164: A Thunder of
Guns 1988
165: In Close Waters
1988
166: Close Escort
1988
167: Requiem For A
Destroyer (1989)



CRIME WRITING LEGEND MICKEY SPILLANE 1918 -2006

by Bob Sheppard



From Killing Man jacket

The recent death of Mickey Spillane has left a huge gap in the ranks of the "old style" crime noir authors. Nobody wrote crime like Spillane.

Following the release of his first novel *I, The Jury* in 1947, Spillane developed a huge following of enthusiasts who proudly called themselves Spillanites.

Spillane characters crunched their way through droves of murderous thugs and cruised there way through the boudoirs of buxom babes. His writing was unpretentious, crude, shocking and damn good fun to read. It was a recipe for success for this popular author.

While the readers loved him, critics canned the Spillane style. In an interview with Jackson Burke in the English men's magazine *Conquest Adventure* (undated circa 1960), Ernest Hemingway was asked what he thought of Spillane's style.



"Spillane doesn't even understand his own subject. He thinks he's writing about crime, he isn't ... Spillane started out as a comic book writer and he's still one ... There are lots of scared little clerks and office boys. They read stuff like *I, The Jury*. But they couldn't read *The Old Man and The Sea*. I don't break a man's arm to hear the bones crack or shoot a woman in the belly when there are lots of better things to do with her. Spillane's violence is for its own sake and means nothing ... Don't talk to me about Spillane!"

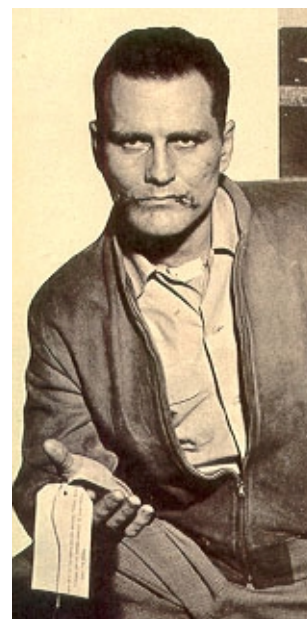
But if Spillane was ever concerned about critics he had the perfect answer.

One only has to look inside the jacket of one of Spillane's later novels such as *The Killing Man* to find the answer to Hemingway's criticism. "In a *Time* magazine survey of best-selling books published in this century seven of the top twenty-five fiction titles were by Mickey Spillane."

By 1990 Spillane had book sales of over 180 million! That's a lot of "scared little clerks and office boys."

And if you were a scared little clerk or office boy you wanted Spillane's main character, Mike Hammer on your side. When it came to dealing with thugs and crooks Hammer took no prisoners, for example, in *My Gun is Quick* ... **"I let him almost reach it, then I slid my own .45 out where everybody could get a look at it. Just for effect I stuck it up against his forehead and thumbed back the hammer. It made a sharp click in the silence. "Just touch that rod you got and I'll blow your damned, greasy head off. Go ahead, just make one lousy move toward it,' I said."**

When interviewed by Jackson Burke, Spillane revealed that his hard boiled hero, private investigator Mike Hammer was modelled on his good friend Mike Stang. Stang was a tough, ex-Marine street cop in New York.



Mike Stang



Spillane and Stang shared a passion for firearms and hatred for the thugs that prowled the mean streets, preying on the weak and vulnerable. Stang was photographed for Burke's magazine article sporting stitches on his face from a recent street battle with a knife wielding thug. In Stang, fiction mirrored fact, and Stang's street knowledge must have been an inspiration for numerous Spillane novels.

Whilst Spillane began his writing career in 1947 he had completed his best work by 1970. Perhaps like Wilbur Smith, Spillane struggled to give his protagonists relevance in his modern novels, away from the world he knew best. *The Killing Man*, published in

1990 after a 19 year break, doesn't quite have the same bite and realism as his earlier novels. Perhaps more "sophisticated" readers have difficulty relating to a detective that still held 50s values in a modern era.

No doubt Spillane's death will see a resurgence in interest in his books and there will be numerous reprints of his classics. Collectors have already begun to scramble to buy signed first edition copies of his novels and complete their collections. With so many million Spillane

books printed there are still plenty around for the collector of good crime fiction. Signet and Corgi were the main paperback publishers of Spillane's work.

It doesn't appear that any Australian publisher such as Horwitz ever published Spillane's novels.

However, *My Gun is Quick*, was published in the Australian Magazine *Peep*, for Men Only in late 1953 to early 1954. **A number of the books and magazines mentioned here are available from www.warrigalpress.com.au**





Lynn Maguire recalls her father, Robert Maguire created a small number of covers for Mickey Spillane. Here are two covers from Maguire's files.

Robert Maguire images courtesy of Lynn Maguire at www.ramaguirecoverart.com